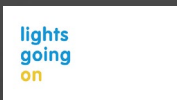


Ahead of the Curve:

new china from China

A Resource for Teachers of
Key Stages 2 and 3

Written by Gill Nicol / lightsgoingon



Exhibition dates:

13 Dec 2014 – 1 Mar 2015

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery
Queen's Road Bristol BS8 1RL
0117 922 3571
www.bristol.gov.uk/museums

Free entry

**Mon – Fri, 10am – 5pm Sat – Sun, 10am – 6pm
(and Bank Holiday Mon) Closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day**

14 March 2015 – 31 May 2015

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery
Bethesda St, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3DW
01782 232 323
www.stokemuseums.org.uk/visit/pmag/

Free entry

Monday to Saturday: 10am – 5pm, Sunday: 11am – 4pm

This resource is designed to help you plan and prepare your class visit to the exhibition, support you on your visit and provide information about the artists and their work. This pack will also provide ideas for follow-up activities. The activities are designed to be cross-curricular and encourage individual and collaborative creative work.

This pack explores this touring exhibition of contemporary Chinese ceramics and glass through a number of themes including Chinese history and culture, cross-cultural exchange, the history of glass and porcelain, language and decoration. It offers ideas for activities and discussion before, during and after a visit to the exhibition, and links to learning in art, geography, literacy and citizenship.

Above all, this exhibition shows the relevance and beauty in making. A recent report entitled **Measuring Craft** (www.craftscouncil.org.uk/downloads/measuring-the-craft-economy/) commissioned by the Craft Council, highlights the extent - £3.4 billion - to which craft skills contribute to the UK's economy. Emphasising the potential for creativity and creative thinking, alongside craft skills, is something that young people will benefit from, connecting across subjects to align ideas and concepts.

Links to the curriculum for KS2 and KS3

The activities in this pack will enable children to explore and develop key areas of the current National Curriculum with a focus on Art & Design, Geography and English. There are activities that allow them to work on their own; to collaborate in small groups; and to work on one large piece together.

In the **Art and Design** curriculum activities will support pupils to:

- produce creative work, exploring their ideas and recording their experiences
- evaluate and analyse creative works using the language of art, craft and design
- know about great artists, craft makers and designers, and understand the historical and cultural development of their art forms.
- create sketchbooks, journals and other media to record their observations and use them to review and revisit ideas;

and specifically for Key Stage 3:

- to analyse and evaluate their own work, and that of others, in order to strengthen the visual impact or applications of their work
- learn about the history of art, craft, design and architecture, including periods, styles and major movements from ancient times up to the present day.

In the **Geography** curriculum, activities will support:

- how identities develop, what we have in common, what makes us different and how we organise ourselves and make decisions within communities
- how people, communities and places are connected and can be interdependent at a range of scales
- undertake investigations and enquiries, using various methods, media and sources
- present and communicate findings in a range of ways and develop arguments and explanations using appropriate specialist vocabulary and techniques

In the **English** curriculum the activities will support pupils to strengthen their abilities to:

- develop ideas thoughtfully, describing events and conveying their opinions clearly
- acquire a wide vocabulary, and begin to vary their expression and vocabulary
- ask relevant questions to clarify, extend and follow up ideas
- elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- talk and listen with confidence in an increasing range of contexts

ICT skills will also be supported in pupils' use of digital cameras and/or iPads to record observations.

The exhibition also offers the opportunity to develop research and critical analysis skills, build their visual vocabulary and use a sketch book to record and analyse artists' work.

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Introduction

Ahead of the Curve shows the latest developments in studio ceramics and glass art from China (particularly Shanghai and Jingdezhen). For many of the fifteen Chinese artists working in ceramics, and the five working in glass, this is the first time their work has been shown in the UK. Bristol Museum & Art Gallery (BMAG) is working with The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery (PMAG), The Wilson, Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum and **twocities** Gallery, Shanghai.

The artists are all at different stages of their careers, and have a range of different influences. All the ceramic artists have a connection to Jingdezhen, the historic home of porcelain manufacture in China; some were born there, some return again and again. For many, their work represents the struggle between the traditional and the contemporary, both in terms of how ceramics are made and used, and also how their work stands within a global contemporary art discourse.

Note on Spelling and Pronunciation

The *pinyin* system of transcribing the Chinese script to the Latin alphabet is used throughout. This system represents the sounds of Modern Standard Chinese (*Putonghua*).

The following few hints may help you pronounce the word:

c- as English *ts-*

q- as English *ch-*

x- as English *s-*

zh- as English *j-*

Themes explored in this resource pack:

Traditional and Contemporary

Identity

Language

Decoration

A brief look at glass

I respect glass as a material and don't want to control it. I try to talk to the glass and understand it. I merge with it to achieve an utterly harmonious connection between my heart and the material.

Wang Qin

What is glass?

Glass is an amazing material. It looks solid and usually transparent. This is due to its molecular structure being more like a liquid. Much of the glass we use every day is a type of oxide glass and the base component is silica. Silica (or silicon dioxide) is commonly found in types of sand.

Hot glass is liquid, but when it cools down becomes progressively more rigid. Glass-makers can heat glass to make it softer and easier to shape into objects.

The oldest glass objects, made in ancient Mesopotamia in the Middle East, were made using a technique called 'core-forming', which involves coating a clay and dung core on a metal rod with molten glass. Another important technique was pouring heated glass into moulds to make pendants and other small objects.

Moulds

A mould is a form used for shaping and/or decorating molten glass. Some moulds had patterned surfaces that the artist would press onto the heated glass object to decorate it. Others, called full-size moulds, are made out of several parts that cover all sides of an object, giving it its final shape. Stone, wood, plaster, and clay have all been used as moulds; however currently moulds for mass-produced glass items are mostly made of metal. The glass objects in the exhibition have been made using plaster moulds.



Tsinghua University, glass studio, students preparing a mould, 2010 © Kate Newnham

A more advanced casting technique is called the 'lost wax' method. When using this technique, the artist or craftsman first carves a wax model of the object he wants to make. Then he coats the model in fine clay, leaving just a few small holes. The clay-covered wax model is then heated, causing the clay to harden and the wax to melt and flow out through the holes. The clay has now become a mould, whose inside is the exact shape and size of the wax model. Now glass can be poured into the mould. This technique is also used to make objects in bronze and other metals.



Figure 2 Artist Wang Qin making wax carvings to be used in the lost wax technique, © Wang Qin

Glass started being made in China around the 6th century BC, in what is called the Warring States Period. You can find objects made using moulds in ancient China in the Chinese glass gallery.



Figure 3 Disc for use in burial, 400-100 BC, moulded glass, © Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives



The glass objects in the Ahead of the Curve exhibition, such as Guan Donghai's *Gate Series*, are made using moulds .

Figure 4 Guan Donghai, *Gate Series Biao*, 2009, glass, © Guan Donghai

Can you tell how the work *Angel is Waiting no 11* was made?



Figure 5 Xue Lu, *Gather series – Angel is Waiting 11*, 2014, glass, © Xue Lu

Artist Shelly Xue has taken existing straight glass tubes and placed them carefully in a mould shaped like angel wings. When heated up, the glass tubes grew soft and malleable, and slumped to the bottom of the mould, fusing together to take the shape of a pair of wings.

The technique of glassblowing has been around since the time of the Roman Empire in the 1st century BC. The discovery that glass could be blown from the end of a hollow tube into different shapes or moulds still remains one of the basic ways to work with glass.

Glassblowing

The main tool of a glassblower is a long metal pipe, known as a blowpipe, usually made of iron or steel and about 4 feet (1.2 meters) long. Once the glass ingredients have melted, a glassblower then dips the blowpipe into the mixture and rotates it to cause a blob of molten glass to collect on the end of the pipe. The glassblower then removes the pipe – complete with the molten glass blob – and blows short puffs of air into the end of it.

Figure 6 Artist blowing glass (taken from www.dstudio.ubc.ca/2012/07/27/glassblowing-just-like-a-design-process/)



Figure 7 Glass Artist J.P. Canlis sculpting a glass bamboo installation (www.commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bamboo_Framing.jpg)

Depending on the desired look of the finished piece, other tools and equipment can also be used to shape the glass as well. Flat graphite paddles, tweezers and calipers can be used to press, pull, squeeze and twist the molten glass, for instance. Moulds can also be used during the glassblowing process as well.

After a glassblower has formed the molten glass to the desired shape, the piece must be cooled properly to prevent the glass from shattering. This is usually done by cooling and reheating the glass repeatedly.

Glass-blowing may have been used in China as early as the 6th century, but it only flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries with the establishment of the Imperial Glass Workshops in the Forbidden City. The first palace glass workshop was set up in 1696 by order of the Kangxi emperor (reigned 1662-1722). It was run by a German Jesuit priest called Kilian Stumpf, a skilled glass-maker. The glass workshops made objects such as vases, cups, bowls, snuff bottles, plant pots, incense burners and items for the scholar's desk. These were used in the palace or given away as gifts.



Figure 8 Altar set, Qianlong marks and period, Qing dynasty (1644 -1912), carved overlay glass, © Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

To learn more about the history of glass in China, you can visit the Chinese Glass gallery in the Bristol Museum & Art Gallery or our website on Chinese glass www.discoveringbristol.org.uk/glass/



Figure 9 Han Xi, *Lost*, 2010, glass © Han Xi

A brief look at ceramics

The oldest known use of clay as pottery dates to the Neolithic Period or New Stone Age, over 10,000 years ago. As farmers began to settle and grow crops, they needed containers that would hold liquids, and be light enough to carry. Clay is dug from the Earth and ground into a powder. This powder is combined with other water and other ingredients to form what is called the clay body.

Early pots were built by stacking rings of clay, which were then smoothed out and fired in a hole in the ground, under a bonfire. This technique is known as 'coiling'. Pots also began to be used for cooking.

In time, cultures around the world began to use clay as an art form; in Greece, potters decorated their pots and vessels with images from Greek mythology, and used natural substances like ochre and potash to add colour. In China, potters started using complex decoration as early as 5000 BC, when potters from the Yangshao culture in North and East China painted their coiled pots with designs of fish and birds, and later with beautiful abstract swirls in black and purple paint. The First Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huangdi (260–210 BC) commissioned craftsmen to make around 8000 sculptures of warriors, which he buried around his gigantic mausoleum.



Figure 10 Terracotta Army, Mausoleum of the First Emperor, Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China, (www.commonswikimedia.org/wiki/File:Terracotta_Army-China2.jpg)

Figure 11 Attic black figure lekythos (bottle), Athens, Greece, 525-500BC, H804 © Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Although they are commonly known as the 'Terracotta Warriors', they are actually not made out of terracotta, but a yellow, sandy material called loess which contains a small portion of clay.



Figure 12 Urn, Gansu Province, China, Majiayao phase of the Yangshao culture, c. 2500 BC, © Bristol Museum & Art Gallery



By the late Neolithic (around 3000 B.C). potters in both China and other parts of the world were using the slow wheel, which meant they could turn the pot as they worked on it. This developed into the fast wheel, whose platform spun on an axle, allowing the clay to be drawn up into a pot through the spinning motion. Pots could be made quickly and the same design repeated.



Figure 13 Transforming clay into a beautiful pot.
Photo by Becky Wetherington, Creative Commons

The invention of electricity gives us the potter's wheel that we know today.

Figure 14. Pottery Wheel
(www.commonswiki.org/wiki/File:Pottery_wheel.JPG)

After ceramic pieces are allowed to dry, they are then placed inside a kiln, fired to a high temperature to allow the clay to harden. A glaze is often brushed onto the piece as well, which contains ingredients that melt in the intense heat of the kiln and form a glassy coating on the surface of the piece.

Ceramics may be divided into three types of wares -- earthenware, stoneware and porcelain. Potters are often referred to as ceramic artists.

Earthenware clay is most similar to what our ancestors used and is the kind of clay you might find in your back garden. Earthenware pieces are porous, so they need a sealing glaze to make them watertight. These clays require the lowest temperatures for firing, and finished products typically turn out in rich reds, browns and oranges. Terracotta planter pots are a good example of earthenware pottery.

Stoneware clay is more heavy-duty and requires higher firing temperatures. This means that the clay vitrifies i.e. turns into a glass-like substance, which is also waterproof. Stoneware is typically used to make plates, bowls and vases.

Kaolin clay, also called white clay, is used to make porcelain. It goes by many other names as well, including China clay and white cosmetic clay. It has lower plasticity than earthenware and stoneware clays, making it tricky to work with.

Arguably the earliest porcelain objects were made in the 6th and 7th century during the Sui (589 – 618 AD) and Tang (618-916 AD) Dynasties in China, in kilns in the present Hebei and Henan provinces of China. They were created from white kaolin clay combined with a type of mineral called feldspar, which was fired at extremely high temperatures. These delicate and artful pieces were expensive to transport, so potters in West Asia and the Middle East invented lead glazes that they used over earthenware ceramics to mimic the whiteness of porcelain. These glazes were important because not only did they add a decorative element to pottery making, they also made the porous earthenware waterproof. European potters soon followed suit, creating colorful glazes to use in their ceramics.



Jingdezhen

Jingdezhen, the ‘city of all day thunder and lightning,’ is located in the northeastern part of Jiangxi province in Eastern China. Porcelain from Jingdezhen, it is said, is ‘white as jade, thin as paper, clear as glass and chimes as sweetly as a bell’. Ceramic production in the area can be traced back to the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), but the city rose to prominence in the 11th century due to the stunning qingbai (‘blue-white’) porcelain produced here. Many of the ceramicists living in modern-day Jingdezhen still practice ancient techniques. The Gaoling mountain, 40 kilometers to the northeast, is one of the few areas in China which provided pure kaolin, one of the essential ingredients for porcelain - the word kaolin comes from the Gaoling (‘High Ridge’) hill.



Figure 15 Chang River, Jingdezhen, 2012 © Helen Brown

Pine wood - fuel for the kilns - was also found in large quantities. Clay, fuel and transportation (via the Chang River) meant that Jingdezhen was perfectly placed to become the porcelain centre of the world.

“You could say Jingdezhen was the Stoke-on-Trent of China. But Jingdezhen was probably a few hundred times bigger.” Takeshi Yasuda, potter and academic, with a studio in Jingdezhen

Most Jingdezhen porcelain is highly valued by collectors of antique porcelain throughout the world. A blue-and-white porcelain jar was auctioned in London in 2005 for nearly two and a half million pounds, showing the high regard given to Yuan Dynasty (AD 1279 – 1368) porcelain in the history of Chinese ceramics.



Figure 16 Wine-storage jar, porcelain, Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), N8045 © Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

During the 13th century it is said there were over three hundred kilns in Jingdezhen. Starting from the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368), the potters began to make the distinctive blue-and-white porcelain. Certain kinds of ceramics, including blue-and-white ones, would from this point onwards be made exclusively for the imperial court. Imperial porcelain production reached its first peak during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644): in 1433 the Ming court ordered 443,500 pieces of porcelain for the imperial household. Jingdezhen’s kilns were unrivalled for hundreds of years throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911).

Classic decorative schemes used at Jingdezhen include ‘blue-and-white’ painting in cobalt blue pigments, moulded and carved panels, red designs painted using copper pigments, coloured glazes as well as overglaze enamel (coloured) decoration painted on top of a glaze. Enamel decoration was first developed in the 12th century, and started to be used in Jingdezhen in the 14th century. It involves first firing the object at a high temperature, allowing the porcelain body and glaze to vitrify, then applying colourful pigments on top of the glaze and then firing the object once more at a lower temperature to ‘fix’ the pigments. In Europe, people refer to Chinese enameled porcelain objects by their colour palette. The two most famous colour palettes are famille verte and famille rose.



Figure 17 Plate, porcelain with overglaze decoration in *famille verte* palette, Kangxi reign (1662 - 1722), Qing dynasty (1644 - 1912), N2673 © Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Famille verte, which means 'green family' in French, was a style developed at the end of the 17th century, and can be recognized by its bright, watercolour-like decoration in green, blue, aubergine, brown and red.



Figure 18 Plate, porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration in *famille rose* palette, 18th century, Qing dynasty (1644 - 1912), N7065, © Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Another famous palette is famille rose, which means 'pink family' and is named after a bright shade of pink it employs that was innovated in the early 18th century in the Imperial Workshops. Famille rose enamel is painted in opaque layers that look a bit like oil painting.

During the Maoist era (1949-1976), it was declared that art must serve the state, and Jingdezhen craftsmen had to serve the state by making mass-produced statuettes and other items approved by Mao Zedong. Today, Jingdezhen is a tourist attraction, and demand for the new ceramic artists is on the increase. Artist Ai Weiwei had his 100 million Sunflower Seeds made and hand-painted in Jingdezhen. Over 1,600 ceramic artists worked on it for two and a half years.



Figure 19 View of Jingdezhen, (c) Robert Law

"For potters it is a fantasy land, where specialists in every aspect of production from moulding to glazing to firing are found. Jingdezhen is drawing young artists from all over China, says Takeshi Yasuda, likening the buzz to the outpouring of creativity in Europe in the 1960s and 1970s. "Something strange and unusual, an energy, is happening," he adds. Financial Times article, Sept 12, 2014, by Nicola Davison

The Potteries, Stoke-on-Trent

Stoke-on-Trent is a city known for its relationship with the ceramics industry. The area is generally known as the Staffordshire Potteries, or just The Potteries. Like Jingdezhen, the pottery industry grew because of the concentration of skills and the availability of the raw materials – the abundance of clay, of salt and lead for glazing; and of coal, used to fire the kilns. The industry reached its peak in the Victorian (1837 - 1901) and Edwardian (1901 - 1910) eras with over 200 factories and 35,000 people employed. In its heyday, there were up to 2,000 bottle ovens in the area – these are distinctively shaped kilns, of which 46 are still standing today and are listed buildings.

Josiah Wedgwood opened his own factory in Burslem in 1759, when the area was already supplying local-made earthenware and stoneware to continental Europe and beyond. Wedgwood and other famous names such as Spode and Minton helped to make the area successful. This was confirmed when, around 1800, Spode's son, Josiah Spode II developed bone china (comprising porcelain clay and bone ash), that rapidly became the standard porcelain body. Many pottery firms were relatively small, employing between twenty and fifty people, with their premises built in the centre of the towns. However, large factories capable of hosting several hundred workers, were being built by some of the manufacturers on the edges of the towns. These were often alongside the canals or major roads. The pottery factories, and, in particular, their distinctive bottle-shaped ovens with their accompanying smoke, came to dominate the six towns of Stoke-on-Trent. The quantity and quality of the finished goods that these factories produced each week was prodigious and their wares were not only sent all over Britain but also exported to Europe and the Americas. This was despite the fact that Stoke-on-Trent was not well situated for easy or cheap transport. During the third quarter of the 18th century improvements were made in local transport. Local potters and aristocratic landowners combined to invest in building a canal to run through the centre of north Staffordshire in order to link the two major rivers, Trent and Mersey, which gave access to the east and west coasts. The Trent and Mersey Canal was opened in 1777 and enabled potters to cut both the cost of transport and the amount of damage their wares suffered in getting to market.

Stoke-on-Trent is still the centre of the British ceramic industry, and is the largest pottery producer in the world. Just as many pots are made in Stoke now as they were at the 'peak' of production- just by fewer people due to increased mechanisation. Success stories include Emma Bridgewater, Steelite and Middleport Pottery (Burgess & Leigh).

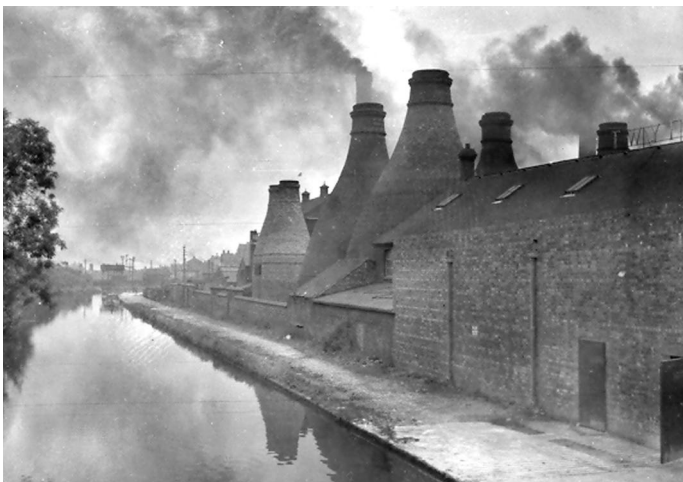


Figure 20 Bottle ovens © Courtesy of The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent.



Figure 21 Bottle ovens © Courtesy of The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent.

Before Your Visit: Discussion and Visual Analysis – KS2

Introduce the class to some of the work. Three images are reproduced below for you to either project or print out.



Figure 22 Shelly Xue, *Gather series – Angel is Waiting 11*, 2014, glass, © Shelly Xue



Figure 23 Zhuang Xiaowei, *Sacrifice*, 2008, glass, © Zhuang Xiaowei



Figure 24 Zhao Lantao, *At Ease*, 2011, porcelain © Zhao Lantao

Invite the students to ask and respond to the following questions, remembering there are no 'wrong' answers:

1. What do you see in the artwork in front of you?

Prompts: Describe it – what kind of material is it made from, what colours are there? How do you think it was made? How would it feel if you touched it? Does it tell a story?

2. Is what you see in this artwork beautiful?

3. Does this art speak to you?

Prompts: Do you like it, if so, why? What do you think it is about?

4. Why do you think the artist made this artwork?

Take away the images, and test their understanding through a memory quiz:

What five things do you remember about the images?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

More research:

Ask the students to use the internet to find out about the following places:
Jingdezhen, Shanghai, Stoke-on-Trent.

Explore the following: where they are in the world, how the cities look – do they have rivers, are they by the sea, what is special about them?

Creating a quiz

Explain what your class will be doing on your visit.

The plan is to get enough information from the exhibition to make a quiz.

- To select images and information from the galleries
- To create a quiz, creatively consolidating knowledge and understanding
- To develop skills in media literacy
- To work collaboratively

Ideally, show your class these examples of quiz questions below before your visit to establish their task. Explain the task to all supporting adults.

Each group will need a sketchbook and/or note pad and, if possible, a camera. It helps for each child to be able to make their own notes and sketches as they explore the galleries. This is what they will be asked to do:

Ahead of the Curve quiz - Class Task

Your task is to take photographs, make drawings and gather information during your visit to the exhibition.

See how creative you can be with questions and photographs, because you will be using the images and information back in class to make a quiz.

In groups of 5, explore the exhibition and find out as much as you can about the work. Together, talk about ideas and select some objects to draw and photograph, that you can use to create questions.

For example, you might draw a bit, or all, of this image:



Figure 25 Wu Hao, *Drunk Pot Series No.1*, 2011, stoneware, © Wu Hao

- 1. What is this?**
- 2. What does its title mean?**
- 3. What do you think this pot feels like?**

Not all of your questions have to have a 'right' answer, some could be about describing a work, or giving an opinion.

Decide how you will mark the quiz, and explain your marking scheme to the class.

You might want to give marks for:

interesting questions and relevant information chosen
creative photographs and layout of quiz questions
answering questions correctly during quiz
additional information and relevant discussion during quiz.

You might also want to give marks for:

good team work
good behaviour during the Museum visit
IT skills in producing the quiz questions.

At the exhibition – KS2:

You will need sketchbooks or paper; pencils, pens, and, if possible, a camera.

All these activities will prepare you for both making and answering the quiz.

Working in groups:

Split into groups of 5 or 6

1. Find:

an artwork made of glass

an object you could use

something to do with colour

In your groups, choose one of these to look at more closely.

One person explains to the others what you are looking at: the others turn around and listen to his/her description.

Individually:

2. In your sketchbooks, do a set of four small sketches of something you like in the exhibition.

Write down the artist names and a description of the work, and why you like it. What does it remind you of? How did they make it? Say something about the size, colour, texture and shape of each work. What is similar about them? or different?

Then do a close up drawing – a detail of one of those you like.
Tell a friend why you like it.

3. Find a work you don't like and say why, to a friend.

Explore as much as you can by yourself as your friends will be setting you quiz questions about the visit too. Keep your questions secret from other groups so that you can test them back in school.

After Your Visit – follow up activities for KS2

The Quiz

Groups work together to prepare quiz presentations which could use the following software.

- PowerPoint, great for using your close up pictures, asking questions, setting up multiple choice or true and false!
- If you have a Smartboard running SynchronEyes software 7.0 or later, you have a quiz wizard which you can use to make quizzes.

Make sure the class is not able to look at each other's quiz questions until the actual quiz. It is good to encourage group discussion and an answer sheet completed by each group could be used. Run the full class quiz. Allot marks according to your marking scheme.

Traditional and Contemporary

1. Task: to create a group installation using clay

Exhibiting artist Wan Liya has created a display of what looks like many household objects – cups, cleaning bottles, hand cream pumps – all made of porcelain. He combines this with a beautiful traditional decoration. Another Chinese artist, Ai Weiwei has made a work called *Sunflower Seeds*, that consists of a vast number of the same thing to create an impact. Consisting of 100 million pieces of porcelain seeds made by 1,600 workers in Jingdezhen, its impact is immense.



Figure 26 Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds*, 2011, porcelain, Installation at the Tate Modern Tribune Hall, London, Loz Pycok from London, UK [CC BY-SA 2.0 (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons; Detail: Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds*, 2011, porcelain, Installation at the Tate Modern Tribune Hall, London, Photo by Marie A.-C., Creative Commons Attribution License via Flickr.

Field, 1991, is a sculpture by British artist Antony Gormley which has a similar effect. It consists of approx. 35,000 individual terracotta figures, each between 8 and 26 cm high, installed on the floor of a room facing the viewer.

"From the beginning I was trying to make something as direct as possible with clay: the earth. I wanted to work with people and to make a work about our collective future and our responsibility for it. I wanted the art to look back at us, its makers (and later viewers), as if we were responsible - responsible for the world that it [FIELD] and we were in. I have made it with help 5 times in different parts of the world." Antony Gormley

The most recent version was made in Guangzhou, China, and was exhibited in Guangzhou, Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing in 2003.



Figure 27 Anthony Gormley, *Field for the British Isles*, 1991, terracotta
© Colin Smith [CC BY-SA 2.0 (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons



Figure 28 Anthony Gormley, *Field for the British Isles*, 1991, terracotta © Colin Smith via Wikimedia Commons

Working as a class or in groups, each person makes their own individual figure in clay. You need to weigh out the clay to make sure everyone has a similar size piece. Eyes and mouth to be made with a pencil, and the figure to be made using hands and fingers.

Bring them all together to make a group, and then into a pattern. Make sure you document the whole process and share the results with the rest of the school!

Language

1. Here is an example of the Chinese language

It is a quote from Jiang Yanze, one of the exhibiting artists. Take a number of the characters, and copy them out on a large sheet of paper. Use this as the starting point to design an artwork either in 2 or 3D. Experiment with colour as well.

生活理念、哲学思考、文化模式的自成一体的系统。

[[Ceramics is not only about craft and technical skill it is also] a way of articulating and thinking about philosophical concepts and cultural phenomena.]

2. Artist Wang Xiao is displaying these two 'figures' in the exhibition.

Create a story as a comic book using these characters.



Figure 29 Wang Xiao, *The Road Series*, 2013, earthenware, © Wang Xiao



Figure 30 Wang Xiao, *The Road Series*, 2013, earthenware, © Wang Xiao

Decoration

Shao Changzong is another artist who borrows from the past to make his sculptural ceramic pieces. In his work *Dreamer*, 2011, the figures can't speak, as their mouths are covered by the traditional floral blue-and-white pattern of the past.



Figure 31 Shao Changzong, *Dreamer*, 2011, porcelain, © Shao Changzong

3. Task:

Write a short story around these six figures. Are they related? Are they friends? How do they communicate? Tell us about the patterns and what they mean – are they a form of fashion? Or another language?

4. Task:

The maps below show the locations of Jingdezhen in China, and Stoke-on-Trent in England. Use the contours of both to create a decorative pattern. You can draw around them, overlap them, repeat them. Think about making a pattern you can use on a ceramic object – an example of this is Wan Liya's *Blue and White Landscape*, 2010.



Figure 32 Wan Liya, *Blue and White Landscape* (detail), 2010

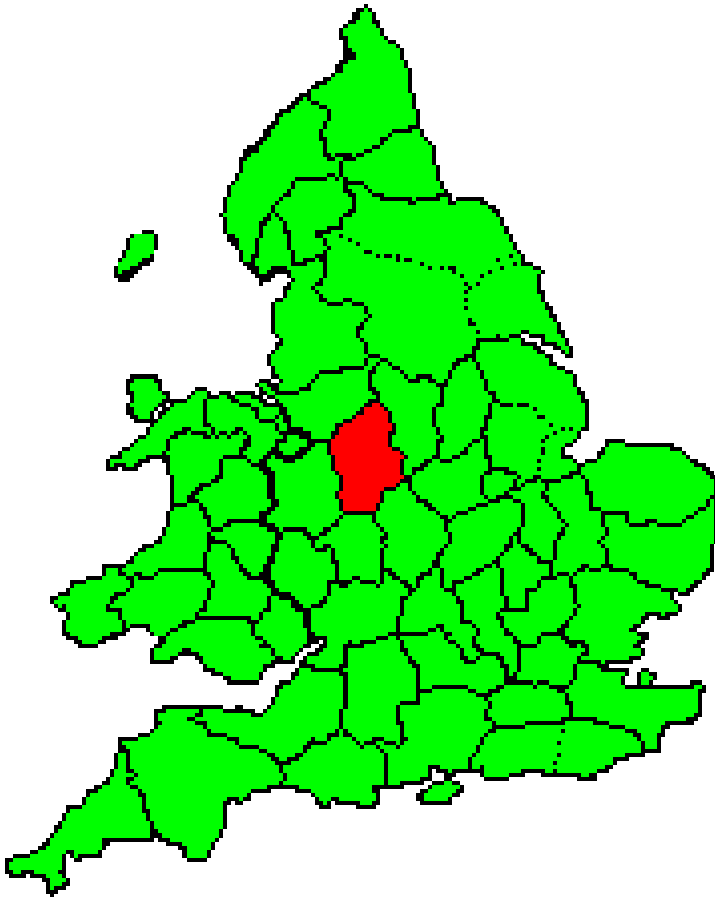


Source: [unintelligible]

Figure 33 Map of location of Jiangxi province in China

Source: [unintelligible]

Figure 34 Map of location of Staffordshire in United Kingdom



Before Your Visit: Discussion and Visual Analysis – KS3

- 1. On an atlas or globe, locate the city of Jingdezhen in China; and Stoke-on-Trent in England. Research both places in terms of their ceramic history and make a list of similarities and differences.***
- 2. Look carefully at these two images of works from the exhibition.***



Figure 35 Yao Jiliang, *Protective Colour*, 2014, porcelain, © Yao Jiliang



Figure 29 Wang Xiao, *The Road Series*, 2013, earthenware, © Wang Xiao

Answer these three questions in groups of 5-6 – take it in turns to answer. Listen carefully to each other and everyone should try to answer the questions.

Why do you think the artist made this artwork?

Does this artwork express emotion?

Look at the title – why does it have this title?

At the Exhibition – KS3

1. Artist Wan Liya (b 1963-) asks this question:

“How can I find a way to meaningfully connect and express both a strong ceramic tradition and a modern personal voice?”

Look at his work entitled *Blue and White Landscape*, 2010. Discuss in pairs if he has succeeded in answering his question with this artwork?

2. Watch the film of ceramic makers in Jingdezhen, and make notes about what it tells you about what it is like to live and work in that town.

3. Have a look at all the works in the exhibition, and see if you can identify some that might have been made by other people aside from the artist. Many artists today come up with an idea about what they want to make, and they then organise someone else to make it for them.

Do you think it matters if someone else made your work?

After Your Visit – KS3

Traditional and Contemporary

Many of the artists in the exhibition look back to traditional Chinese ceramics, and borrow aspects of it to put into their own work. Below are two images – the one on the left shows a famille-rose 'Persimmon' Vase, an example of 18th century imperial Chinese porcelain from Bristol Museum & Art Gallery's collection. The other image is the work of exhibiting artist Wan Liya, made in 2010. Wan Liya has cast in porcelain, a range of ordinary objects that function as containers - milk cartons, takeaway coffee, toilet cleaner and so on – and had them decorated by craftspeople in Jingdezhen, using a traditional pattern.



Figure 37 Bottle, mid to late Qing Dynasty (1736-1912), porcelain with enamel decoration, N5377, © Bristol Museum & Art Gallery



Figure 38 Wan Liya, *Birds Twitter and Fragrance of Flowers* (detail), 2010, porcelain, © Wan Liya

Look closely at both images, and discuss the similarities and differences.

1. Task: to create a group installation

Over a period of a month, invite students to collect and bring in a range of empty tins, glass and/or plastic bottles. When you have at least 50 plus of these, paint them white using basic household paint. These can be arranged to make an installation.

Set the students the task of drawing in their sketchbooks what kind of decoration, pattern or story could be painted onto the objects. Will they be in a line or in a group? Stacked or laid on their sides? If you use the exhibition as inspiration, what kind of traditional – or contemporary – pattern could be painted onto the objects? A William Morris design for example?

Ask them to research artists like Tony Cragg and Matthew Darbyshire (as below). Make sure every stage is documented.

Have a look at this installation by a contemporary artist, Matthew Darbyshire, who worked with an existing collection of studio pottery, called the W.A. Ismay Collection, and shown at the Hepworth in Wakefield.

By re-contextualising the collection, Darbyshire raises questions and debates on issues of taste, fashion, availability and value in today's consumer society.



Figure 39 Matthew Darbyshire: The W.A. Ismay Collection at The Hepworth, Wakefield, November 2013, Photo by Gill Nicol

2. Individual Task:

Do you collect anything? If you do, think about how you display these objects, be they comics, toys or fridge magnets. Can you put them in different situations – on window sills, in cabinets, on the floor – and document them. Show each other the different arrangements and discuss which works best and why.



Figure 40 Matthew Darbyshire: The W.A. Ismay Collection at The Hepworth, Wakefield, November 2013, Photo by Gill Nicol

3. Task:

You were invited to try to identify works in the exhibition that had been mass produced, or made by someone other than the artist.

Research the work of these two conceptual artists: Sol LeWitt and Lawrence Weiner. Both of them used instructions as a method to make artwork.

Sol LeWitt often hired people to carry out his written instructions for works of art. Have someone read LeWitt's instructions (below) to you while you carry them out. You'll need a black crayon, a ruler, and paper. After you have finished the drawing, switch roles and read the instructions to your partner while he or she draws.

WORK FROM INSTRUCTIONS (1971):

USING A BLACK, HARD CRAYON DRAW A TWENTY INCH SQUARE.

DIVIDE THIS SQUARE INTO ONE INCH SQUARES.

WITHIN EACH ONE INCH SQUARE, DRAW NOTHING, OR DRAW A DIAGONAL STRAIGHT LINE FROM CORNER TO CORNER OR TWO CROSSING STRAIGHT LINES DIAGONALLY FROM CORNER TO CORNER.

Are there any differences between the two drawings? Discuss.

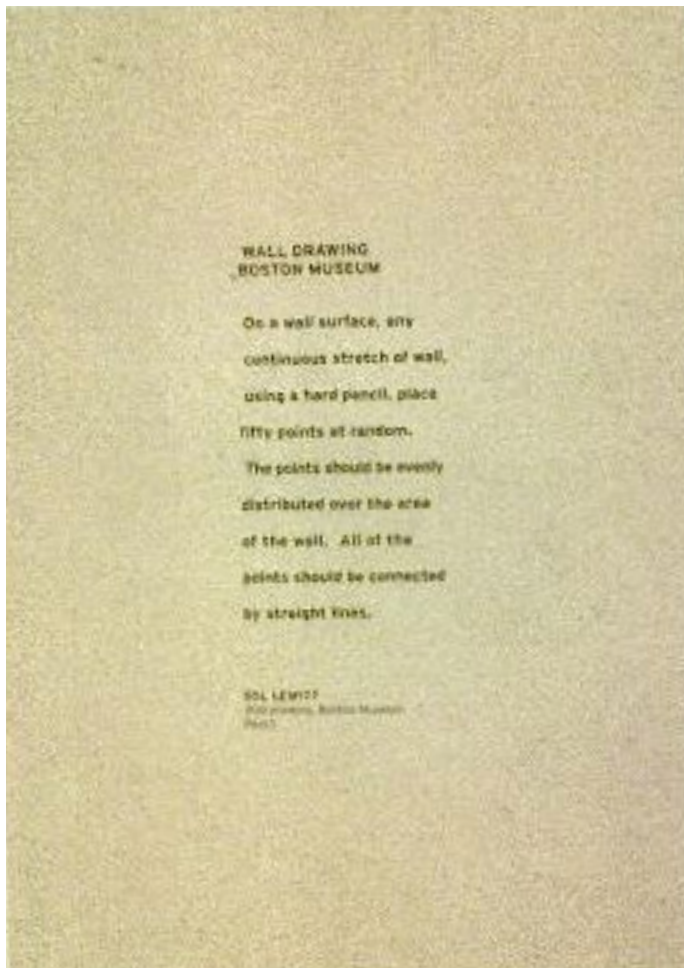


Figure 41 Example of one of Sol LeWitt's instructions

Identity

1. Xu Hongbo is one of the artists in *Ahead of the Curve*. His work has been described as 'social acupuncture'.

His Clones series looks at the idea of reproducibility, of cloning and ideas of mass production. Compare his work to that of Grayson Perry, who, amongst other things, makes colourful decorative pots that often show references to a range of subjects including political events and cultural stereotypes.

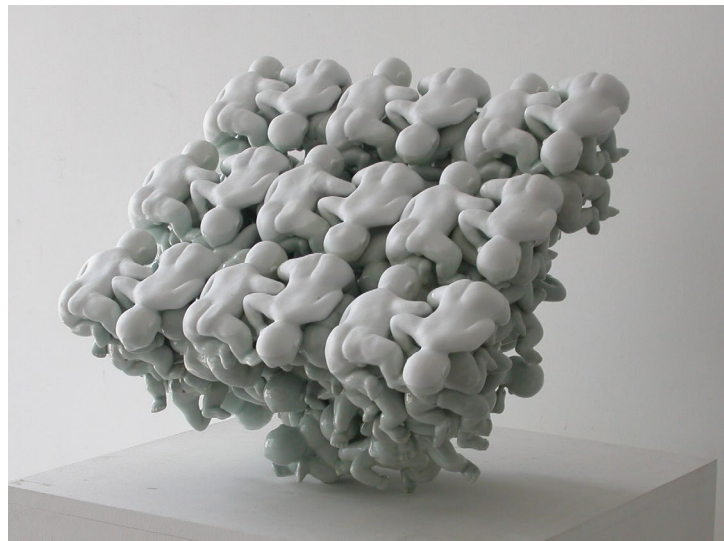


Figure 42 Xu Hongbo, *Clones – position*, 2007, porcelain



Figure 43 Grayson Perry, *Designer Rebellion*, 1999

Discuss the following after looking closely at *Clones*:

How is society changed by technological advances?

Is technology always a positive factor?

Another artist to research is Paul Scott. Scott's *Cockle Pickers Tea Service* responds to the tragic 2004 drowning of nineteen Chinese gang workers in Morecombe Bay. He borrows elements from the Willow Pattern and shows the water inexorably rising to engulf the scene. It was made to commemorate the passing of the parliamentary bill to abolish the Slave Trade but it also reminds us that slavery is still an issue in Britain today.



Figure 44 Paul Scott, *Cockle Pickers Tea Service*, porcelain, 2007, © Paul Scott

Invite students to think about what they feel strongly about in terms of social issues linked to PSHE/ Citizenship curriculum. What would decorate their pot? Themes of sexuality, politics, class, technology, bullying, fashion, identity?

2. Using the notes you made whilst watching the film of ceramic makers in Jingdezhen, write a short story about a day in the life of...

This could be you, imagining living and working there; or it could be one of the people you saw.

3. Artist Jiang Yanze has this to say about her work entitled *Banquet 3*, 2013

"The art of ceramics is not only about craft and technical skill; it is also a way of articulating and thinking about philosophical concepts and cultural phenomena. The main characters in the Banquet series are pots with human characteristics. I try to reuse these daily objects to convey the sense of ritual and a consciousness about life in Chinese culture. Cups, plates, bowls and teapots, which are usually seen as lifeless objects, are ordered in such a way that they display a dramatic scene of a monarch and his subjects."

Task:

Design a tea service that is a portrait of someone you know. It could be about you or any of your family, your friends, even your pets...

Language

A number of the Chinese artists, and many contemporary artists work across and ask us to rethink what we mean by fine and applied crafts. In groups, discuss what is meant by the following:

What is pottery?

What is ceramics?

What is sculpture?

Read or listen to Grayson Perry's Reith lectures, and see if what he says supports your discussion around these terms. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/series/reith>

Decoration

Shao Changzong is another artist who borrows from the past to make his sculptural ceramic pieces.

1. Compare Shao Changzong's works *Faceless, 2012* and *Low-flying, 2012* with UK ceramic artist Claire Curneen.
2. Imagine a conversation between the figure by Claire Curneen (below) and one of Shao Changzong's figures. Write a short script and illustrate this using a storyboard format.



Figure 45 Shao Changzong, *Low Flying and Faceless, 2012*, porcelain, © Gill Nicol



Figure 46 Claire Curneen, *Guardian, 2012*, porcelain, cobalt, and gold lustre, © Claire Curneen



Figure 47 Claire Curneen, *Guardian (detail), 2012*, porcelain, cobalt, and gold lustre © Claire Curneen

Task

3. Create a work of art that is a skin, membrane, sheathing, covering or layer.

You can use any material you like – plastic, clay, paper, wood etc.

Start by researching – look back at the exhibition again in terms of decoration and surfaces. Collect images that relate to your ideas, and create a mood board.

Think about decoration, and experiment with a variety of shapes, forms and methods. Do you want the material to be see-through? Waterproof?, solid or fluid? Do you want to wear it – as a cloak? A hood?

Chronology of Chinese History

Neolithic

Neolithic Period in China
Gansu Yangshao culture

c.6500 BC – 1500 BC
c.3000 BC- 1500 BC

Early Dynasties

Shang Dynasty
Western Zhou
Eastern Zhou

c. 1500 – 1050 BC
1050 BC – 771 BC

Spring and Autumn Period
Warring States Period

770 BC – 475 BC
475 BC – 2221BC

Imperial China

Qin Dynasty
Han Dynasty
Three Kingdoms Period
Northern and Southern Kingdoms Period
Sui Dynasty
Tang Dynasty
Five Dynasties
Song Dynasty
 Northern Song
 Southern Song
Yuan Dynasty
Ming Dynasty
Qing Dynasty
 Shunzhi Emperor
 Kangxi Emperor
 Yongzheng Emperor
 Qianlong Emperor
 Jiaqing
 Daoguang
 Xianfeng
 Tongzhi
 Guangxu
 Xuantong

221 BC – 207 BC
206 BC – AD 220
221 – 280
265 – 589
589 – 618
618 – 906
907 – 960
960 – 1279
960 – 1126
1127 – 1279
1279 – 1368
1368 – 1644
1644 – 1911
r. 1644 - 1661
r. 1662- 1722
r. 1723 – 1735
r. 1736 – 1795
r. 1796 - 1820
r. 1821 - 1850
r. 1851 - 1861
r. 1862 - 1874
r. 1875 - 1908
r. 1909 - 1911

Republican China

Republic of China
People's Republic of China

1912 – 1949
1949 – present day

Links

Exhibition venues

Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives

www.bristolmuseums.org.uk

The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent

www.stokemuseums.org.uk/visit/pmag/

The Wilson, Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

www.cheltenhammuseum.org.uk

Useful websites

Bristol's Chinese glass website, with database of 300 pieces of Chinese glass

www.discoveringbristol.org.uk/glass

Corning Museum of Glass, New York State, USA

Excellent introductions to world glass including videos of glass-making

www.cmog.org/

V&A Museum - thousands of examples of ceramics and glass online

www.collections.vam.ac.uk/

The British Museum - thousands of examples of ceramics and glass online

www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx

Centre for Contemporary Chinese Art, Manchester

Showcasing projects with contemporary Chinese artists

www.cfcca.org.uk/